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The Euro 2008 official mascots Trix (left) and Fix pose for photographers in front of the trophy of the EURO soccer tournament during the opening of the "Europe Experience Tour" launched in Basel on Monday. Until the opening match of the UEFA EURO 2008 in Basel, the trophy will make 13 stops in Switzerland and Austria, including the competition's eight host cities.

Bird flu fatalities reach 100

Of the four Jakartans declared infected with avian flu virus on the weekend, two of them died on Sunday. The latest fatalities brought the number to 100 deaths from 124 cases. The Health Ministry's avian flu emergency unit said in a press release on Monday a 23-year-old man from East Jakarta, East Jakarta, and a nine-year-old boy from neighboring Depok municipality died on Sunday after being hospitalized for three days at the referral Sulianti Saroso Infectious Diseases Hospital in North Jakarta. The officials were still investigating the victims' last contact to infected fowls. Two other patients including a 31-year-old woman from East Jakarta and a pet bird lover identified as Nas, 32, from Tangerang regency, were still receiving intensive treatment at an Antara Jakarta hospital.

Five U.S. soldiers killed in north Iraq

Five U.S. soldiers were killed in a coordinated attack in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul Monday, U.S. military officials said, making it one of the single deadliest against American forces in months. The soldiers' patrol was hit by a roadside bomb before it came under small arms fire in Iraq's third-largest city, the military said. The day after Iraq reinforcements arrived in the city for a "decisive" final push against al-Qaeda militants. Few other details of the incident were immediately available. — Reuters

TEXT YOUR SAY

Villain or hero

Former president and architect of the New Order regime, Soeharto, died of multiple organ failure Sunday. Do you think Soeharto was a villain, a hero or both? Write your thoughts on Twitter at +62 811 187 2772. Please include your name and city. — Editor

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Royal farewell to Soeharto



Soeharto's friends defend his legacy

Agence France-Presse Singapore

Contemporaries of Indonesian former president Soeharto on Monday paid tribute to his role in bringing stability and economic progress to his country. Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew said he would accord "a place of honor" in Indonesia's history while Malaysia's former premier Mahatir Mohamed described him as a "great leader and an international statesman."

Australia's former foreign minister Alexander Downer, while criticizing Soeharto for his human rights record, also praised him for his impressive grip of the region. "He was certainly greedy, he was certainly a dictator, he

certainly had a poor human rights record," said Downer, who was foreign minister until last November.

"But on the other hand, there was very much more to president Soeharto than that. He did have a very impressive strategic understanding of the region," he added.

"Younger people do not know how disastrous was the economic situation in Indonesia before September 1965 when hyper-inflation was drowning Indonesia's economy," he wrote.

"Under Pak Harto's leadership, he turned the country around and made Indonesia an economic success story," said Lee, referring to Soeharto by the term with which he is known politely and affectionately.

But Lee said he believed Soeharto was not responsible for "the foreign debt problems of many Indonesian companies and banks that triggered the rupiah's fall."

"I have no doubt history will accord Pak Harto a place of honor in Indonesia's history when his life's work is studied in calm perspective," he added.

Malaysia's former premier Mahatir Mohamed also defended Soeharto's legacy.

Mahatir, a contemporary of Soeharto during their long terms in power, told the official Malaysian news agency, Bernama, that accounts the former Indonesian leader added Lee, referring to Soeharto by the term with which he is known politely and affectionately.

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Surakarta stops for Soeharto's entourage

The Jakarta Post Surakarta, Central Java

Hundreds of thousands of Central Java people bid farewell to former president Soeharto on Monday, who they said deserved the highest of tributes from the nation, despite his controversial rule in the past.

Hours before Soeharto's body arrived Monday at the Adi Sumarmo airport in Surakarta — also known as Solo — residents lined the 35-kilometer road the military ambulance used from the airport to the Astana Giribangun cemetery in Matsehi subdistrict, Karanganyar regency.

Many said they wanted to pay their last respects and bid farewell to the country's second president and great leader. Many others said they were there for the entertainment value and to find out what the funeral procession looked like. Thousands of elementary and high

school students in their uniforms stood up in groups to see the convoys of cars carrying Soeharto's family members, state officials and other mourners.

Some students waved mini national flags while others unfurled banners that said "Selamat Jalan Pak Harto!" (Farewell Pak Harto!) and "Selamat Jalan Sang Jenderal!" (Farewell the General).

Most students flocked to the street at the instruction of their teachers. Some of them said they didn't know the former president personally and but said they had learned about his achievements for the sake of the nation.

"We were ordered by our teachers to see Soeharto's funeral process and all the groups of people participating in the funeral ceremony," said Dewi, a student at the Kentingan state elementary school in Solo.

Rubiem, a library staff member with the Sebelas Maret University in Solo, joined the group of people on the street near the campus to see the funeral procession. Lessons at the campus virtually ground to a halt, while activities at government offices in Surakarta and Karanganyar were stopped.

Since Sunday, air and land transportation services to Surakarta and Karanganyar have been crowded and most hotels in the two towns were booked out by thousands of people from Jakarta and other towns.

Airline companies, including Garuda Indonesia, have provided additional flights to Solo and Yogyakarta in line with the increase in demand for seats following Soeharto's death on Sunday.

"Out of 115 hotels, including seven three- and five-star ones in Solo, all are fully occupied with many hikers in room tariffs," said Subandono, chairman of the Association of Hotels and Restaurants (PHRI) in Solo.

The Jakarta Post Karanganyar, Central Java

Former president Soeharto, who died on Sunday, was given a state funeral likened to the burial ceremonies of the ancient Javanese kings at his family mausoleum in Karanganyar, Central Java, on Monday.

Soeharto's body was carried in a military hearse at the head of a long procession from Adi Sumarmo airport in Surakarta (Solo) to the Astana Giribangun cemetery, where his wife Siti Hartinah (Titi) Soeharto, and other relatives are buried.

Thousands of locals, including school children, stood patiently along the 35-kilometer route toward the burial place to give their farewells and pay a last tribute to Indonesia's longest serving president.

Soeharto died at 86 at Pertamina Hospital in Jakarta and was transported to Central Java aboard a Hercules C-16 aircraft via Halim Perdanakusuma Airbase in Jakarta.

The service commenced with the reading of Soeharto's biography, including mention of his great contribution to the nation during his military service and his 32-year presidency.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who had arrived on the scene earlier, presided over the funeral ceremony.

Those present at the ceremony included Soeharto's children, his sons and daughters in law, grand children and other relatives. Halimah, the divorced wife of his second son, Bambang Trihatmoko, and Regita Cahyani, also known as Tala, the divorced wife of his youngest son, Hutomo "Tommy" Mandala Putra, were also in attendance.

Several neighboring countries including Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar and Timor Leste sent delegates to attend the funeral. A great number of state officials were also in attendance, including House Speaker Agung Laksono, Defense Minister Joe Widada, Welfare Aburizal Bakrie, chairman of the Regional Representatives Gathering Kartasasmita, Chief Commander of the Indonesian Military Gen. Djoko Santoso, and the chiefs

of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Soeharto's successors, B.J. Habibie, Abdurrahman "Gur Dur" Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri were not seen at the funeral.

Soeharto's body was buried next to his wife's grave, while soldiers fired salvos of guns and in attendance paid their last respects.

The funeral was managed by workers from the royal Surakarta Mangkunegaran Palace.

In his address, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono hailed Soeharto as an important figure who had made a great contribution to the country. The President said Soeharto was a human being who had faults and who had committed mistakes during his 32-year tenure.

"We have lost one of the nation's best sons, a loyal fighter, true soldier and honorable statesman," Yudhoyono said.

"We say thanks for his great contribution and meritorious service to the nation during his life and forgive all his faults," he said.

During his military, political and administrative career, Soeharto, who awarded himself the status of a five-star general, was once dubbed the "father of development."

Soeharto left behind him a great number of unresolved human rights abuses and corruption cases — especially in connection with the abortive coup of the 1965 overthrow of the 1968 transfer of authority from the Old Order regime, and alleged power abuses that benefited his family and cronies during his long presidency.

Representing Soeharto's family, the former leader's eldest daughter, Siti Hardiyanti "Tutut" Rukmana thanked the people who expressed sympathy for her father.

She appealed to the public to pardon her father in order to smoothen the path for her father to return to the Almighty God. "However, even as the nation's enters to declare seven-day mourning period and increasingly louder calls are being heard for the public to pardon Soeharto, victims of human rights abuses, including those arrested and imprisoned without trial during his tenure, continue to say that they see no reason to forgive him.

BI governor named suspect in graft case

The Jakarta Post Jakarta

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) confirmed Monday that it has named Bank Indonesia (BI) Governor Burhanuddin Abdullah and two other BI officials as suspects in a graft case involving House of Representatives lawmakers.

KPK deputy chairman Chandra M. Hamzah told The Jakarta Post Monday that the three were declared suspects for their alleged involvement in the misappropriation of BI funds.

"They are (referred to as) BA, OHT and RS. We are now moving to further investigations," Chandra said. Chandra refused to spell out the initials, but the suspects that they were the same.

KPK investigators have also searched the offices of Burhanuddin in Jakarta, and RI in Surabaya. The anti-corruption body has questioned BI Governor Burhanuddin Abdullah, BI Legal Affairs Director Oey Hoeng Tiong and former head of BI communication bureau Rusli Simanjuntak.

Despite their status as suspects they remain free. The KPK often puts newly declared suspects under detention to facilitate further investigations. KPK has maintained a good record of building strong cases. All state officials it has indicted have been convicted and jailed.

Chandra said the KPK investigators questioned Burhanuddin earlier this month in connection with the transfer of Rp. 3 billion (around US\$380 million) of BI funds, to House members, during the deliberation of a revision of the Law on Finance in 2005.

The money was to have originated from BI Banking Development Foundation. The funds allegedly served as grease money to smooth the revision. Such practices have reportedly been commonplace, but a lack of evidence has impeded investigations into the alleged bribery cases.

The transfer of BI funds was discovered during an audit by the Supreme Audit Agency in 2005. The members of the House of Representatives, however, have been questioned in connection with the case, but a lack of evidence has impeded investigations into the alleged bribery cases. Chandra said the KPK was still waiting for results of the on-going investigation before it could name other suspects, including strong cases. All state officials it has indicted have been convicted and jailed.